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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of private contributions to public schools in Arkansas, and the effect of district superintendents actively seeking such contributions. Questionnaires were sent to all school districts in the state, of which 65 percent responded. The data indicate that private contributions are received in about two-thirds of the school districts from corporations, service organizations, and private individuals, and take the form of money, buildings and land, equipment and supplies, and contributed services. Larger school districts and districts in which the superintendent has expressed a perceived need for contributions were found to receive more support from private sources. (Author/WD)

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ARKANSAS SCHOOL DISTRICT USE AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEIVED NEED OF PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS

by

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An Abstract

Each school district in Arkansas was surveyed to determine the extent public education is being supplemented with contributions from the private sector. About two-thirds of the districts reporting, identified receipts of private philanthropy. These contributions were categorized in four types (monetary, buildings and land, equipment and supplies, and contributed services). Contributions were also categorized as coming from three sources (corporations, service organizations and private individuals).

Larger school districts were found to have more contributory activity than smaller school districts. Also, the perceived need expressed by the school district superintendent for these contributions was a significant factor in predicting private support of public school education in the form of equipment and supplies and contributed services.

ARKANSAS SCHOOL DISTRICT USE AND ADMINISTRATOR
PERCEIVED NEED OF PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS

The current state of the economy affects public school education with curtailed resources to meet increasing costs. Aspirations of modernizing administrative services, expanding curricular offerings and reducing pupil/teacher ratios are dampened by the effects of the economic recession. To supplement local, state and federal subsidies of public school instruction, educators have sought resources from the private sector.

Sources and Types of Private Support

Private resource support of public school education has been called one of our least tapped resources (Thompson, 1979). In fact, private foundations are generally perceived easier to deal with to get grant subsidies than government agencies (Havighurst, 1978). Although most publisized private foundation support comes from large foundations (e.g., the Exxon, Ford and Rockerfeller Foundations), the existence of some large and numerous smaller foundations may be found in every state in the union (Thompson, 1979).

These sources of private support may be classified in three categories (1) corporations, (2) service organizations, and (3) private individuals. Corporate support may come with or without strings attached (Cabot, 1978: Malott, 1978). Roser (1979) also addresses the different demeanor private business and non-profit agencies may take in philanthropic gestures since profit and loss factors affect them differently.

Contributions to public school education may come in four forms: (1) monetary, (2) buildings and land, (3) equipment and supplies, and (4) contributed services. Exorbitant building costs have brought occurrences of shared

facilities, joint occupancy and multiple-use buildings used concurrently by public schools, communities and private organizations (Seifert, 1977; Baas, 1973). Land contributions have also been sought from local developers in an effort to cut educational costs (Brown and Hollander, 1972). Human resources outside faculty members are little used by many school districts, but could be used in development projects and to conduct a variety of student activities (NASSP, 1971).

Private support activity of public school education receives contrasting reviews. The Council for Financial Aid to Education (1976) noted voluntary support from the private sector has failed to match the rate of inflation and growth of enrollment. A much more optomistic view is proposed by Doll (1979). He predicts corporate funding will eventually replace publically supported systems, rationalizing the economic and social problems will leave corporations as the only viable institution to provide services such as education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which Arkansas public schools are receiving contributions from the private sector. The school district administrators' perceived need for these contributions was also assessed. Finally, the relationship was determined between types of contributions acquired and a set of selected predictor variables (student enrollment, assessed valuation, millage, district debt, local appropriation, expense per student and state appropriation).

Method

A questionnaire and accompanying cover letter were developed to assess the extent contributions were received by school districts in Arkansas.

Paired combinations of each contributory source (corporations, service organizations and private individuals) by each contributory type (monetary, buildings and land, equipment and supplies, and contributed services) were incorporated into the questionnaire. Also, school district administrators were asked to rate their perceived need for these various types of contributions from the private sector. Published data from the State Department of Education were recorded for each school district for each of the seven additional predictor variables.

Results

Of the 372 questionnaires sent to school district superintendents in Arkansas, 243 were returned, representing a 65 percent response rate. These returns were received within three weeks of the original mailing date with no follow-up procedures conducted.

Overall, 67% of those responding indicated their district gets some resource support from the private sector, as reported in Table 1. Contributed services (49%), monetary contributions (45%) and equipment and supplies (40%) were reported more frequently received than were contributed acquisitions of buildings and land (7%). However, the source of contributory support did not vary more than ten percent: corporations (36%), service organizations (45%) and private individuals (46%).

Insert Table 1 about here.

A chi-square test of independence indicated monetary contributions and acquisitions of buildings and land were independent of the district administrator's (superintendent's) perceived need for these contributions,

as presented in Table 2. However, a moderate relationship was found to exist between superintendent perceived needs and contributions of equipment and supplies, and contributed services.

Insert Table 2 about here.

The figures in Table 3 illustrate the perceived need expressed by superintendents for the four types of contributions. The proportion of districts reporting these contributions to be essential ranged from 60% to 81%. Note from Table 1, in contrast, the reported receipt of these contributions ranged from 7% to 49%.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Results from the discriminant analyses performed to predict contributory status by type of contribution and source of contribution are presented in Tables 4 and 5. The overall Wilk's lambda for the combined discriminant functions ranged between .87 and .94. Five of the selected predictor variables were highly correlated. Each of these represented an expression of size of the district: student enrollment, assessed valuation, district debt, local appropriation and state appropriation. Two other predictor variables, millage and expense per student, generally were not significant as predictors. The perceived need of the school district for these services was not significant with respect to two types of contributions, monetary and gifts of buildings and land. However, perceived need was a significant factor in predicting contributions of equipment and supplies and services.

Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here.

Discussion

Overall, school district administrators perceived the need for contributions from the private sector to be essential. These needs were apparantly perceived to a greater degree than they were being realized.

Generally, larger districts reported the receipt of contributions more frequently than smaller districts. Furthermore, contributions of equipment and supplies and contributed services were realized to a greater extent by those districts deeming them essential. Therefore, superintendents perceiving the need for contributions of equipment and supplies and contributed services represented school districts that were more successful in acquiring these forms of private support.

This study presents a statewide assessment of the nature and acquisition of private resource contributions to public school education in Arkansas. Implications from the literature review and subsequent statewide results illustrate a variety of private philanthropic contributions have been acquired by public schools. School districts feeling the economic pinch of the recession might be advised and encouraged to pursue the various avenues presented to supplement public resources with private contributions.

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Table 1

Percentages of School Districts Reporting Contributions Received by Private Sources

Type of Contribution	Source of Contributions: Corporations	Service Organizations	Private Individuals	Overall
Monetary	22%	25%	20%	45%
Buildings & Land	2%	1%	4%	7%
Equipment & Supplies	20%	24%	18%	40%
Services	14%	34%	39%	49%
Overall	36%	45%	46%	67%

Table 2

Tests of Independence Contrasting
Contributions with Perceived Needs

Type of Contribution	Chi-Square	Probability	Contingency Coefficient
Monetary	2.14	.344	
Buildings & Land	.52	.771	
Equipment & Supplies	9.60	.008*	.20
Services	25.93	.000*	.32

*p<.05

Table 3

School District Administrator Perceived Need
For Various Types of Contributions

Type of Contribution		Perceived Need: Very Essential	Somewhat Essential	Non-Essential
Monetary	No.	51	130	51
	Pct.	(22)	(56)	(22)
Buildings & Land	No.	31	106	92
	Pct.	(14)	(.46)	(40)
Equipment & Supplies	No.	37	141	57
	Pct.	(16)	(60)	(24)
Services	No.	64	121	44
	Pct.	(28)	(53)	(19)

Table 4

Discriminant Analysis: Factors Predicting School District Receipt of Private Contributions by Type

Type of Contribution: Monetary	Wilk's Lambda	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight	Type of Contribution: Buildings & Land	Wilk's Lambda	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
State Appropriation	.912	.000*	.858	District Debt	.976	.020*	-.403
District Debt	.913	.000*	.854	State Appropriation	.993	.220	-.211
Student Enrollment	.919	.000*	.818	Student Enrollment	.996	.339	-.145
Assessed Valuation	.943	.000*	.678	Expense Per Student	.997	.418	.139
Local Appropriation	.945	.000*	.668	Perceived Need	.999	.262	.088
Expense Per Student	.995	.277	-.196	Assessed Valuation	.999	.653	-.077
Millage	.995	.289	.193	Millage	.999	.801	.043
Perceived Need	.996	.323	.180	Local Appropriation	999	.828	-.037

Type of Contribution: Equipment & Supplies	Wilk's Lambda	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight	Type of Contribution: Services	Wilk's Lambda	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
Student Enrollment	.958	.002*	.606	Perceived Need	.889	.000*	.789
State Appropriation	.961	.002*	.584	State Appropriation	.957	.002*	.476
Perceived Need	.961	.003*	.580	Student Enrollment	.960	.002*	.459
District Debt	.965	.004*	.555	Assessed Valuation	.967	.006*	.414
Local Appropriation	.975	.015*	.465	Local Appropriation	.968	.007*	.406
Millage	.976	.017*	.457	District Debt	.972	.011*	.382
Assessed Valuation	.976	.017*	.456	Millage	.983	.050	.292
Expense Per Student	.981	.038*	-.397	Expense Per Student	.999	.826	.033

*p<.05

Table 5

Discriminant Analysis: Factors Predicting School District Receipt of Private Contributions by Source

Contributing Source: Corporations	Wilk's Lambda	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
District Debt	.901	.000*	.868
Student Enrollment	.907	.000*	.840
State Appropriation	.908	.000*	.834
Assessed Valuation	.933	.000*	.703
Local Appropriation	.937	.000*	.681
Expense Per Student	.992	.171	-.232
Millage	.995	.258	.192

Contributory Source: Service Organizations	Wilk's Lambda	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
State Appropriation	.937	.000*	.760
Student Enrollment	.943	.000*	.718
Local Appropriation	.961	.002*	.590
Assessed Valuation	.961	.002*	.587
District Debt	.963	.003*	.576
Millage	.967	.004*	.545
Expense Per Student	.985	.058	-.361

Contributory Source: Private Individuals	Wilk's Lambda	F-test Significance	Discriminant Weight
State Appropriation	.947	.000*	-.815
Student Enrollment	.950	.001*	-.788
District Debt	.965	.004*	-.655
Local Appropriation	.975	.014*	-.551
Assessed Valuation	.976	.017*	-.534
Millage	.990	.127	-.340
Expense Per Student	.997	.400	.187

*p<.05